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ReFashion ReDunn

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Design at Massey University, Wellington,
New Zealand.

Janet Dunn 2008

For my suppliers:

Jackie, who has passed on, leaving me with bags full of the skirts, blouses and big cardigans which were her uniform in life.

Norma, who is moving into a time in her life where possessions will be less important. I have received her lifetime's hoardings, including a book of union rules for the garment trade.

Una, who let me buy her collection of beautiful ball gowns which she had made herself and wore while dancing the night away with her husband.

Uta, who was an excellent dressmaker and fashion designer, and kept her stock of couture fabrics for ten years to make sure that she really did not want to do that work any more.

Peter, who gave me his retired ties, and mentored me after his own fashion.

And Sharon, collector extraordinaire, whose Costume Cave conceals untold tatty treasures.

Thanks also to Andrea, Helen, Sylvia, Judith, and Margaret for modelling in the forest, city, flood and drought.

Acknowledgements

This study arises out of the researcher's experience in the fields of costume and fashion. It develops, through design practice and reflection, a design process for fashion wear made from post-consumer recycled materials. Theoretical analysis provides global, historical, philosophical and design contexts within which to develop an ethos for this variant form of fashion wear designated ReFashion.

Differences in design process between conventional fashion and ReFashion are detailed to highlight the significance of provenance of materials in the light of a perceived need to slow down clothing production and consumption. This perception is informed by scientific predictions that failure to engage with urgently needed changes to the prevalent economic paradigm will result in planet earth reaching a tipping point with potentially disastrous results for its inhabitants. Fundamental to the ReFashion ethos is preparedness for a speculative post-apocalyptic future that might render the fashion system unable to operate as it currently does, necessitating a more self-sufficient approach to clothing needs, with an accompanying shift in perceptions of what is deemed fashionable. The theme Survivalist Fantasy provides a lens to bring conceptual and material aspects of the work into focus. Informed by sustainability, Survivalist Fantasy recontextualises a failure of sustainable initiatives on a global scale and their adaptation on a local scale specifically in the arena of clothing.

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